

The Greater Philadelphia Dahlia Society Wrap-up 2018 National Show

When Longwood Gardens came to the members of The Greater Philadelphia Dahlia Society some years ago with the suggestion that we mark the ten-year anniversary of our last National Dahlia Show with another, they promised increased dahlia displays throughout the Gardens and much support for the show itself. They suggested that together we could stage "A Dahlia Spectacular." We think that the partnership of The Greater Philadelphia Dahlia Society and Longwood Gardens did just that. Unfortunately, we were unable to arrange for the beautiful September weather we had in 2008, but despite the weather, the Dahlia Spectacular was, in a word, SPECTACULAR.

The formal festivities began on Thursday evening with a cocktail reception. Staging commenced on Friday and continued on Saturday. Despite unfavorable weather in many parts of the country for much of the growing season, there were 1565 entries and 2567 blooms. Dahlias traveled from all over North America to participate – including Oregon, Nova Scotia, New York, Ohio, Maryland and Georgia! The judges and clerks started doing their thing on Saturday morning around 9:30, finishing up in time for the public to begin viewing the show at 1 pm. A delicious buffet luncheon was served on Saturday in the Ballroom. Guided behind-the-scenes tours of Longwood attractions were provided on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Educational opportunities were provided in the Visitor's Center on Saturday and Sunday, including a presentation by Dr. Jorge Nieto Sotelo, Director of the Botanical Garden of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Approximately 150 full registrants enjoyed a cocktail hour and banquet on Saturday evening. The American Dahlia Society recognized members with awards. The banquet was followed by a private Illuminated Fountain Show with tunes from the "American Songbook Re-imagined."

The dahlias were blooming beautifully outside in the Longwood Flower Garden Walk and the Idea Gardens. Well over 12,000 visitors on Saturday alone viewed the displays of the dahlias both in their natural habitat and staged in the Conservatory. Some attendees were able to fit a bus tour of several regional attractions into their schedule on Monday. These included the fabulous Chanticleer Garden, the Hagley Museum featuring all things DuPont, and appropriately for Kennett Square, the Mushroom Capital of the World, a mushroom farm. Volunteers from The Greater Philadelphia Dahlia Society donated many, many hours of preparation. Longwood staff members were instrumental in helping things run smoothly. Overseeing every aspect of the planning were the co-chairs Mike Horn and Dean Thomas. The Greater Philadelphia Dahlia Society wants to thank all who attended, contributing the most to the success of the show by their very presence. We hope everyone agrees that we indeed managed to host "A Dahlia Spectacular."